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ABSTRACT

This report on alternative educational systems presents an overview of some current theories and proposals for educational reform as background to the description of development of three alternative schools in Toronto. The evolution of schools formed by groups outside the public system and established under the jurisdiction of the Toronto Board of Education is traced. Development is described in terms of the financial, legal and administrative arrangements made by the schools and the Board. Legal consideration of governance of these alternative programs, budget considerations, questions concerning teachers and pupils, and problems of building accomodations are discussed and an informal evaluation of the success of these programs is made. A bibliography includes references and suggestions for further reading on alternative schools. (SHM)

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ALTERNATIVES: STRATEGIES AND STUMBLING-BLOCKS

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PREFACE

Any innovative idea or practice which offers even the slightest potential for improving the course of public education is usually greeted with a great amount of fanfare by educators and the public alike. The innovation is discussed in workshops, researched, evaluated, even tried. And, when the bandwagon sputters to a crawl and the fanfare dies, it is a sign that the innovation, if a new technique, has either been ignored or been slowly absorbed into everyday practice; or, if a new perception, has been transformed into a nebulous slogan with so many meanings to so many people that it tends to be meaningless altogether. Through it all the course of public education remains very much the same.

There is a possibility that this transformation will also occur with what many see as the most hopeful idea of the past few years -- "alternatives." Appearing in a variety of contexts, the word has already become something of a catch-phrase whose meaning is blurred. What many parents, teachers or trustees see as an alternative, for example, is no alternative at all to some educational theorists.

This report begins with a broad, non-critical overview of a few major proposals for "alternatives" in an attempt to clear some of the confusion attached to the word's use, all as a prelude to the report's specific purpose. That purpose is to document the evolution of three "alternative" schools -- ALPHA, Laneway and CONTACT -- which were formed by groups outside the public system and were established under the jurisdiction of the Toronto Board of Education in September, 1972. This evolution is considered in a narrow sense, dealing only with the financial, legal and administrative arrangements made by the schools and the Board.

The administrative approach was taken because some of the more obvious problems faced by such schools (overcoming internal stresses, planning curriculum, ordering space and time and developing new roles for parents, teachers and students) have been discussed in other reports and journals from all over North America. The problems discussed here are likely not unique to local schools either, but little has been written on these very practical difficulties which can halt the development of an alternative school before the programme has a chance to be implemented.

Greg Cable
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ALTERNATIVE FUTURES FOR EDUCATION

There are a few people who reject the concept of alternatives as a new idea by saying that alternatives have always existed in a variety of forms. For proof they can point to private schools, patronized almost exclusively by the rich; to special schools offering areas of opportunity beyond the regular curriculum (such as the Toronto French School or the National Ballet School); to the Separate School system and other religious day schools; even to the large number of schools offering instruction in particular skills from hairdressing, driving, and modelling, to musical or foreign language proficiency.

There is some truth to the assertion that these are alternatives only if one accepts the present system of public education as a "given" and views the purpose of these institutions as filling in small but inevitable gaps within it. None of the schools mentioned above, with the exception, in a very minor way, of the private schools, represents a divergence from the rationale and structure of the present public system. The structure may be parallel, as in the case of the Separate Schools, but not very different.

The proponents of alternatives take a different view, critically examining the system as a whole from a detached vantage point and staking out positions which differ by the degree of rejection of that rationale and structure. What most theorists share is a view that education is in a state of crisis, coupled with a view of the public system as a leviathan which lumbers along despite that crisis. The greater the deficiency perceived in the system, the more radical is the strategy for change.

The following are brief descriptions of a few alternative proposals for educational reform, of which one involves the establishment of "alternative" schools in the most commonly used sense of the word. In truncated form, some of these proposals may sound overly simplistic or shrill and it should be noted that such brevity cannot do anywhere near justice to the arguments advanced by these theorists.

An Alternative Society: De-schooling

The most radical of all the alternative futures proposed for education is that developed by Illich (1971,1972) and Reimer (1971). Their analysis of the present crisis is based on a far-reaching analysis of society and, accordingly, they call for revolutionary changes not only in education but in the western socio-political system as well.

Illich pinpoints the cause of the educational crisis as being the attempt to fit reality to the dogma that schools are necessary, when in fact they are necessary only to serve the industrial system, built up over the past hundred and fifty years, which is now in the process of crumbling. The industrial-technological society they describe is a society obsessed with the production and consumption of ever smaller and more intricate packages of goods; a system which thrives on planned obsolescence and deliberate complication to the extent that the average man now views the man-made environment much as the primitive viewed nature -- as a dark mystery, penetrable only by the modern equivalent of the witch doctor, the professional.

In relation to this society, schools stand much as the Catholic church stood in relation to medieval society -- a monopolistic institution

aligned with the state, operated by, and largely for, the privileged classes. Schools constitute:

> "the universal church of a technological society, incorporating and transmitting its ideology, shaping men's minds to accept this ideology, and conferring social status in proportion to its acceptance"
>
> (Reimer 1971, p. 3)

In order to shape people to meet the social and economic requirements of a particular elite whose values are dominant and, therefor treated as truth, economic value is placed on knowledge, thus determining the curricula in schools from elementary to post-secondary. The long-ter consumption of this curricula, divided into separate and easily digested packages is the means of secular salvation and first-class citizenship. "Men are not born equal, but are made equal through gestation by Alma Mater." (Illich 1972, p. 7)

Faced with the apostasy of increasing numbers of drop-outs, schools try to make the production and consumption of knowledge more efficient through technology, but fail because of the bankruptcy of the consumption ethic. "Free" schools do not solve the problem either, because they produce only a "mirage of freedom"; learning is still define as "the acquisition of socially valued skills defined, in this instance, by the consensus of a commune rather than by the decree of a school board." (Illich 1972, p. 6). Indeed, no institutional answer can be found since the predominance of institutions is the basic problem. And, in their view, institutions are, by nature, inefficient, inhuman, undemocratic and oppressive.

The answer that Illich and Reimer propose is the removal of all the barriers between the individual and the world he seeks to know. They reject the idea that the learner and what is to be learned must have

an artificial, institutional constraint between them as a mediating influence. The basic educational resources necessary for learning -- people, objects, space and time -- need not be ordered only in schools or institutions resembling schools which do not get far enough away from the stereotype of a school as an institution that requires "students at specific ages to spend most of their time attending teacher-supervised classrooms for the study of graded curricula." (Reimer 1971, p. 9)

The society and culture must be de-schooled. The ritual of schooling which imbues everyone with role definitions which maintain a heirarchy of privilege must be abolished. The enormous amounts of money which now go to schools must be given to the individual learner, along with access to technological tools such as records, machines, printing presses, audio and visual tapes, and games. Access to people must also be provided through networks of competent practitioners of techniques and others with specialized knowledge, with the role of the teacher being to orchestrate these resources at the direction of the student.

Harking back to the religious analogy, this proposal parallels Luther's "priesthood of all believers" by asserting that technology, freed from the institutions in which it is hidden behind a mask of professional expertise, can be used by each individual to understand, create and communicate. Education would remain an inalienable right, but would no longer be a coercive obligation.

Alternative Functions for Schools

Bereiter (1972a&b) and Coleman (1972a&b) both attempt to bring the operation of schools into line with present reality, but do not propose the massive overhaul of the social structure required for de-schooling. Rather, they both seek to redefine the functions of schools.

Bereiter lists three current functions of schools -- education, skill training and custodial care, -- and recommends that schools concentrate on the latter two and forget about education entirely. He states that it would be proper to do so because "education" is morally untenable, and would be practical as well since "educating" does not work anyway and would not be missed if no one mentioned its absence.

The concept of education with which he is dealing is not the developmental process that occurs both within and without schools, but the intent and effort to influence or direct that process through the management of an individual's experiences. This effort, he feels, is analogous to the practice of eugenics since both interfere with human life in the interest of "improving" human beings. He finds it difficult to understand why education "is universally approved while eugenics is universally abhorred." (Bereiter 1972a, p. 27). Even "informal" education as practised in the English infant schools is a form of manipulation, though far more subtle than usual. It is an attempt to play God in "a society that seeks to deny God-like powers of one person over another." (Bereiter 1972a, p. 25). It is authoritarian, deceptive, non-egalitarian and, fortunately, unworkable.

Bereiter maintains that the fact that education does not work is not widely recognized only because both defenders and critics of schools assume that school is a potent force without any substantiating evidence. He finds no evidence that school has any "demonstrable effect on productive thinking, abilities, personality traits, attitudes and values, or citizenship." (Bereiter 1972a, p. 32). For this reason he feels that schools could easily drop the education function and, by so doing, do a much better job of child care and skill training.

These two functions, he feels, have little in common: training teaches successful performance, has definite goals and is authoritarian by nature; child care, on the other hand, is not judgemental, has no defined goals and requires freedom. He would, therefore, keep the two functions separate in terms of both location and personnel in order not to confuse the child and in order to allow the teachers to become expert in their skill subject or in providing imaginative resources and activities in an atmosphere of freedom.

Coleman argues that societal and economic changes over the past few decades, coupled with the alteration of family life wrought by those changes, leave the schools carrying out functions which are better handled outside the school environment while neglecting a function which is required today.

In the past, a child would learn to function in society as a responsible adult through personal activity in the home and through apprenticeship or early job training. Schools, carrying out the classical function of teaching basic skills and providing access to information not normally available in the home, broadened the child's horizons by providing vicarious experiences to supplement direct, personal experience.

With the growth of electronic media, however, society has become "information-rich" with vicarious experience becoming predominant for everyone, particularly for children, for whom such experience is an early and major factor in their development.

At the same time, society has become action-poor. Work has become a specialized activity which takes place in large, rather impersonal institutions from which children are excluded by minimum wage laws and union regulations. And, with both parents holding jobs, the home "closes

down during the day," while in the evening adults tend to interact socially only with other adults. The home has ceased to be a rich learning environment.

The end result has been that the "school of hard knocks" has suffered a drastic cut in enrolment, leaving today's youth in the passive role of "students" somewhere on society's fringe. Schools, all the way up to post-secondary institutions, stretch out adolescence by serving as holding stations on the way to adulthood. Thus shielded from responsibility, kept from productive work, and maintained in a dependent position, youth becomes irresponsible, unproductive and dependent.

The way out of this morass is to redesign schools so that they focus on productive activities "with responsibilities that affect the welfare of others, to develop the child's ability to function as a responsible and productive adult." (Coleman 1972b, p. 75). In order for the school to take on this new function, Coleman would recognize that the media has already removed one of the classical functions from the schools and would move the remaining one out through the use of "skill-specific" vouchers. Schools would then be integrated with more flexible and open economic and social service institutions so that after age twelve the child would gradually be moved into society rather than shielded from it.

Alternative Schools and the Free School Movement

The past ten years have been marked by the fairly rapid growth of "free schools" which differ from some of the older "progressive schools" by the addition of a basic political component to pedogogical progressivism. Although to many people the phrase still conjures up a vision of radical long-hairs studying astrology or making candles, all in defiance of

compulsory attendance laws and other disciplinary restraints, the "free school" label encompasses a variety of school types.

There are a few characteristics which most of these schools share, and these include: opposition to the public school system, both methods and results; a small enrolment; a dependence on parents and other volunteers for a large part of the classroom activities; and a low pupil-teacher ratio. By considering only these characteristics and not the teaching methods employed, one can include in a discussion of free schools the "community school" which often objects to the application of the free school designation.

Graubard (1972) resolves this designation problem by tracing what he sees as the two often contradictory notions of freedom which are the theoretical underpinnings of the "free school movement." The first is the strand of pedagogical freedom common to most middle-class schools where the basic goal is the development of the child in the affective realm, realized through the establishment of a non-coercive learning environment. The second is the political or cultural strand operative in community schools where fundamental skills are stressed in a highly structured learning environment as a way for individuals to gain control over their own destinies and thus overcome the oppression of the dominant social institutions. From the interaction of these two strands comes a diversity of free schools which Graubard categorizes as variants of four basic types.

The first is the "classical," Summerhill -- type of school, originally founded by A. S. Neill, which emphasizes the emotional and expressive development of the individual. It is a small, multi-age grouping, supported mainly by the middle class. Pupils often board at the school, and decisions are made collectively by the entire community.

The second is the "parent-teacher co-operative elementary school" formed by parents, "especially young, white, liberal, middle-class parents who do not want their children subjected to the regimentation of the normal public schools." (Graubard 1972, p. 365). Theoretical sources for this type of school include the writings of John Holt and Joseph Featherstone, and the practice of open-plan, English infant schools. A parent board decides general policy which is implemented on a day-to-day basis by sympathetic, usually professional teachers.

The third type is the "free high school" which comes in three basic forms. The first is a secondary school counterpart to the Summerhill School, often formed on the initiative of activist students, usually middle-class with counter-cultural overtones. The second is oriented more towards working-class students, "mainly drop-outs or potential drop-outs who feel very hostile to their public high-schools." (Graubard 1972, p. 366). The third form is the "street academy" of many American cities which serve mainly poor or minority group students.

The fourth type is the "community elementary school" founded by people who "see the struggle for community control of the public schools as a vital goal." (Graubard 1972, p. 367). Usually established in working-class neighbourhoods, these schools place major emphasis on fundamental skills in a structured programme with strict discipline and other traditional classroom approaches.

Since free schools are usually inspired by rejection of the public system, most avoid contact with local boards in order to avoid the taint of corruption. Many of the schools, however, for reasons variously described as financial instability, dissipation of energies or atrophy of the teaching function, collapse after only a few years in operation.

Accordingly, there is some movement toward reaching accommodation with public boards in the interest of survival.

Options in Public Education

With the recognition by school boards that a significant minority of parents are dissatisfied with the public schools, a number of different alternatives have been formed within public systems. The value of having such options is both social and educational.

Socially, a pluralistic system provides opportunities for a high degree of parental involvement in educational decision-making and allows parents who are dissatisfied with conventional schools to have their children educated in the manner they wish without forcing their chosen methods on other parents. Educationally, the existence of options allows both children's individual learning styles and teacher's differing teaching styles to be accommodated and matched.

Smith (1973) lists the types of alternatives now found as public system options in some U.S. cities. The list includes: open schools, with particular interest centres within the building; schools without walls, which depend on a high degree of interaction with the community and individualization of study; learning resources centres or magnet schools which can be used by entire communities; bilingual or ethnic schools; schools offering programmes for specific groups, such as street academies, drop-out centres or "pregnancy-maternity" centres; intergration models for racially mixed areas; free schools; and schools-within-a-school which could be "any of the above organized as a unit within a conventional school." (Smith 1973, p. 434).

ALTERNATIVES WITHIN THE TORONTO SYSTEM

Many of the options listed previously are often started on the initiative of innovative school officials. In such situations administrative difficulties can be foreseen and overcome in the planning stages since decisions are made with full cognizance of legislative requirements and inter-system procedures. Where the initiative for an alternative comes from outside a board of education, however, decisions must be made on the basis of compromise with organized groups who have fixed ideas as to how their school should function.

The process of finding solutions to practical, administrative problems can be confusing and difficult to all concerned. This is particularly so since many alternative groups prefer to maintain an arm's-length relationship with the "system establishment," and since boards may make different ad hoc decisions in reaction to the varying demands of the different groups.

SEED

The first alternative school in the Toronto system was SEED (Summer of Experience, Exploration and Discovery). Begun as a Summer programme in 1968 and 1969, it was continued over the Winter of 1969-70 as a non-credit extracurricular programme. In June, 1970, after students from SEED presented a brief to the Board, it was incorporated as a secondary school within the system.

Originally, SEED operated as a totally free school, with students responsible for deciding what to learn and for finding resource people from whom to learn. In order to operate under the Board's jurisdiction, however, the school had to offer "core" courses taught

for credit by certificated teachers who were selected from existing staff by Board officials. Enrolment was restricted to 100 students who were chosen by lot from a long list of those wishing to attend.

Since no space was available in any secondary school, SEED was housed in facilities rented from a centrally-located "Y". Policies were set by the school's "co-ordinator," who was responsible for day to day operations; by the Superintendent of Secondary Schools, who was the nominal principal of SEED; and by a special SEED subcommittee of the Board's Management Committee.

Since many of those originally involved with SEED's development were employees of the Board and since there was no organized group of parents or teachers with strong feelings and/or set plans for the school, its establishment was accomplished with relative ease. The procedural decisions relating to governance, accommodation, staffing and enrolment, however, could not be regarded as firm precedents for dealing with outside groups. Three such groups approached the Board over the Winter and Spring of 1971-72, and with each, different compromises were worked out.

ALPHA

The ultimate stimulus for ALPHA (A Lot of People Hoping for an Alternative) was the Hall-Dennis report, Living and Learning. A group of parents in the Toronto suburb of North York attempted to implement the philosophy of the report by forming an alternative multi-age grouping school, M.A.G.U. within the North York Board. Its success led a number of people at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (O.I.S.E.) to consider forming a similar school in the inner-city.

The group placed an advertisement in the Community Schools newspaper and held meetings with interested parents at the Community Schools workshop. The ad attracted a fairly broad cross-section of socio-economic classes. By October, 1971, through a series of general meetings at O.I.S.E. and core-committee work, a general proposal for an alternative was developed for presentation to a few trustees. A more detailed, but still fairly vague, proposal was submitted to the SEED committee the following month.

Their brief noted that while regular schools may serve the needs of the great majority of parents in the city, for the signatories the system lacked "what we would consider to be relevant and necessary to our educational goals and values."[1] The group felt that in a non-coercive learning environment reflecting the values of co-operation, tolerance of diversity, autonomy, freedom of expression and social responsibility, the goals of competence in basic skills (both cognitive and affective), initiative and self-respect could be maximized. The means of achieving these goals were to be through the accommodation of different learning styles by the introduction of a variety of instructional methods; through a multi-age grouping in which any child could find a group or environment "consistent with his learning needs"; through a continuity between home and school achieved by involvement of parents in the instructional programme and extensive use of community resources; and through "the elimination of arbitrary standards and goals."

One of the most important elements in the concept was the parental participation so extensive that living and learning would not

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1 A brief to the Management Committee, November 12, 1971.

be distinct activities. As opposed to a geographic community in which there are diverse educational ideas and viewpoints, the ALPHA group formed a psychological community of people from all areas of the city, sharing the same values. As originally envisioned, the school was supposed to be not only in harmony with home experiences, but an actual extension of the home.

The SEED (now renamed Alternatives in Education) Committee's recommendation that the concept of ALPHA be approved was adopted by the Board on December 16, 1971. After acceptance, the ALPHA group underwent a subtle transformation. Various groups who had participated in the early meetings drifted away and new people who had heard about the school from the media began attending. The influx exacerbated a conflict which had existed in a minor way from the beginning. One group, which included many of the original proponents of ALPHA, emphasized the co-operative or communal nature of the school and foresaw it operating as an extended family for the parents as well as for the children, with continual use of the facility, skill exchanges, communal meals etc. Another group simply wanted control over their children's education and felt that too many communal activities would stifle the individuality of both parents and pupils. Gradually, attention came to be focused almost exclusively on the "school" aspects.

Laneway

Laneway Community School was actually established in 1969 by a group of mothers in Trefann Court, a neighbourhood in Toronto's Eastern inner-city core. The impetus for its foundation was the mothers' disenchantment with their local school. In 1969, they began weekly

sessions of investigation and discussion about education and submitted a sharply critical brief to the Board. They came to view the school system as a mechanism for streaming too many working-class children into dead-end jobs through a system of opportunity classes and special vocational and special high schools. Because some of their own children were in that stream and were to continue on to a vocational school, the mothers formed Laneway.

For the first three years the school was registered with the Ministry of Education and was financed by the Varsity Downtown Education Project operated by the University of Toronto Students' Administrative Council. It was housed in the Trefann Court neighbourhood centre, Dixon Hall, and operated by a council composed of parents and teachers. Enrolment varied from anywhere between nine and fifteen pupils, with a staff of two.

The Laneway programme laid major emphasis on developing the fundamental skills of reading and writing since, in the parents' view, their children were not taught these skills in regular schools. In the first year, the learning environment was relatively unstructured, the results of which were not encouraging. Accordingly, a structured, individualized programme was introduced and is still maintained.

With a change in priorities, the V.D.E.P. funds were cut off after the 1970-71 school year forcing Laneway to look elsewhere for financing. A number of alternative sources of funds were investigated but to no effect. In February, 1972, they turned to the Board.

Their proposal stated that they expected an enrolment of forty pupils in the Kindergarten to grade eight range, although older pupils would be accepted in order to up-grade them in the basic skills. The two teachers would be taken on staff by the Board.

On March 23, the Board adopted the Alternatives Committee's recommendation that Laneway be approved, in principle, as a pilot project under the supervision and authority of the Board.

CONTACT

The idea for CONTACT arose out of several meetings in the Spring of 1972 between fewer than ten people, some of whom were from O.I.S.E., but most of whom were teachers in city secondary schools. Their basic premise was that students who do not benefit from the regular school programme and who often either drop out or transfer into technical, commercial or vocational programmes frequently need no more than a change in programme methodology in order to improve motivation and achievement.

The main thrust of CONTACT's methodology was to establish a solid feeling of self-worth through attention to individual needs and interests, involving students in educational decision-making, and "increasing personal contact and rapport between all members of the community."[2]

The school was designed to provide an opportunity to receive a graduation diploma for students who had already left school as well as for those who were gaining so little from the regular programme that they were potential dropouts. CONTACT was to be quite different from SEED in that all courses were to be for credit and also in that CONTACT was to attract students from the inner-city who were seemingly average or below average in academic capabilities. The proposal called for an enrolment of fifty students with a staff of four.

On June 15, the Board approved the concept of the school with the proviso that accommodation could be found at no cost to the Board and that it would not be necessary to reduce staff in other schools. Because

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2 Proposal for CONTACT, May 4, 1972.

the 1972 budget had already been struck when the CONTACT proposal was submitted, teachers had already been assigned to schools on the basis of projected enrolment. Only if enrolment exceeded the projections could the four teacher positions at CONTACT be created. Since there was some doubt that the enrolment figures would even be met, let alone surpassed, and since even if the figures were surpassed, teachers would have to be transferred in mid-term, the CONTACT group submitted a second proposal to the Advisory Vocational Committee in August, 1972.

This plan called for the school to be operated as a night school from September to December, offering a programme of eight to ten credit courses, all within the four discipline areas of H.S.1 -- Pure and Applied Sciences, the Arts, Communications, and Social Sciences. Teachers would remain with their regular schools during the day and be paid the same rate as night school teachers for their work with CONTACT. This plan was not viewed enthusiastically by the group, but they felt that it was preferable to possibly postponing the school's operation for another y

The Committee approved the operation of evening class sessions and directed that an assessment of the school's achievements and activitie would be made prior to the programme going full-time in January, 1973.

LEGAL CONSIDERATION OF GOVERNANCE

Discussions or negotiations between a school board and alternative groups must be held within a framework of provincial statutes and ministerial regulations. A few of the strictures contained in the acts may be inimical to the basic concepts of some alternative schools. Compulsory attendance at a free school is an obvious example, and one in which there is practically no flexibility of interpretation. Most of the regulations, however, are open to some degree of interpretation, with the result that alternative groups can accept the basic provisions of the legislation while arguing about the manner of their implementation.

In their proposals, each of the alternative groups outlined patterns of internal decision-making and external administrative authority which contrasted sharply with the administrative structure operative in regular schools. All emphasized a high degree of community involvement and a predilection for operating on their own with little reference to other schools or to the Board itself.

For the ALPHA group, basic policies were to be set in the weekly meetings of the whole community. Ad hoc committees had been set up to deal with particular problems relating to the school's establishment and a more coherent committee structure was instituted as the school opened. The governing body was to be a staff-community council with day to day operations handled by the staff, one of whom would be appointed head teacher. The group was not anxious for a principal to be appointed, but had few objections so long as they had a say in the appointment and so long as the appointee was sympathetic to the concept and goals of the school.

They leaned towards a particular principal in the inner-city who could be responsible for ALPHA as well as his own school.

Laneway, too, did not particularly want a principal and suggested that if one were essential he be a figurehead only. The school's internal policies were set by regular meetings of the staff and parents and they wished to continue this procedure while under the Board's jurisdiction. A condition of attendance at Laneway was that the child's parents must take part in the meetings.

The CONTACT proposal recommended that the school not come under the authority of a regular school principal since the needs and curriculum of CONTACT would be different than those of existing secondary schools. They asked that direct contact with the Board be through the Director or through a superintendent designated by him. Internally, the group foresaw one teacher being appointed interim co-ordinator, with responsibility for acting as official spokesman to the Board and other outside bodies and for ensuring that policy decisions were carried out. The policies would be decided by "two overlapping bodies": all students, staff, resource personnel and interested parents; and an "executive committee made up of representatives of each of the constituents," which would select a permanent co-ordinator and serve an advisory function within the school.

In March, 1972, when only ALPHA and Laneway had submitted their proposals, the Board's Finance Committee asked the solicitor to report on the statutory obligations of the Board in connection with the governance of the proposed alternatives. His report stated that "a board may not make grants to or otherwise support schools which are not under its jurisdiction or charge" and that:

> "a school under the charge of a board must be operated in accordance with the school acts including the regulations made by the Minister. A board may not delegate to committees comprising parents, teachers and others, the responsibility for the selection of staff and for the establishment of policy."
>
> (A report from the Solicitor to the Chairman and Members of the Board of Education, March 22, 1972).

One of the mandatory duties of a board under the Schools Administration Act is the "appointment of a principal and an adequate number of qualified teachers for each school that it operates" (S.33:10).

The duties of a principal prescribed by the School's Administration Act and supplemented by Ministerial Regulation 191 include: maintaining proper order and discipline; recording pupil progress; maintaining attendance records; making reports to the board, on request, on the efficiency of the teaching staff; and maintaining close co-operation with the homes (S. 21 (2) and Reg. 191, S. 14). The solicitor concluded that under the proposed form of organization, neither ALPHA nor Laneway could be financed by the Board.

A member of the ALPHA community who was a lawyer drew up a response to the solicitor's report, stating that the school always intended to operate under the statutory requirements of the legislation. His brief stated that "the object of community participation does not depend on the creation of a particular power structure or administrative set up, but can be attained within the existing framework" so long as the administrators involved were sensitive, sympathetic, and supportive of community participation. The brief also noted that there was no legislative requirement that the principal be in full-time attendance at the school, and expressed the opinion that all the duties and functions of the principal could be carried out without such attendance.

There was also the example of the SEED pattern of responsibility by which the Superintendent of Secondary Schools was officially designated as principal, leaving a co-ordinator in effective charge of the school's programme. It was this pattern which was favoured by CONTACT. The solicitor stated that this procedure was only followed because the programme was housed in rented accommodation, and that should it be housed in a secondary school, SEED would come under the jurisdiction of its principal.

Eventually, a different procedure was followed with each of the three schools. Because it was operating as a night school, CONTACT was placed under the administrative jurisdiction of the Assistant Superintendent for Extension Programmes, and was subject to the same regulations regarding class size, teaching staff, etc. as other evening schools. Some compromises on the application of these regulations had to be worked out, however, since CONTACT was not like other evening schools in terms of student population, accommodation or curriculum.

Since Laneway was located near several public schools, it was felt that it should be placed under the jurisdiction of one of the local principals. The Laneway group ranked their preferences and the Board assigned them to their second choice. Laneway was thus considered to be a classroom of that public school.

While ALPHA was still in the embryonic stage of its development, the Superintendent of Curriculum and Program came to be the administrator most involved with the school. As such, he in effect became the "nominal" principal without being so designated. The school remained under his administrative jurisdiction, while the detailed work of the school's operation was handled by a principal on special assignment to the Director's office.

BUDGETS

Of the many alternative schools formed outside public systems over the past few years, a large number folded after only one or two years in operation. Different observers give diverse reasons for their early demise, but a basic reason on which all seem to agree is financial starvation. Quite naturally, then, one of the main motivations for alternative schools to come under the jurisdiction of a board is the security of financing which such affiliation brings. In the tangle of laws, regulations and procedures which are involved in such a move, however, no issue can cause more confusion and misunderstanding than the formulation of budgets for the alternative schools.

Alternative groups feel that their needs differ from those of regular schools. Administrative costs can be drastically reduced in small schools without a full-time principal, while costs for resource people and materials may be much higher than is normal for other schools in the system. Alternatives, therefore, usually express a preference for lump-sum payments which can then be allocated according to needs by the schools themselves.

Budgetary procedures used by boards, however, are pretty well fixed and alternatives are forced to conform. On the question of lump-sum payments, for example, the procedures require that funds be allocated to particular areas before budgets can be approved. All such procedures and categories (these include per pupil cost ratios used within Metro, the division of capital and current accounts and of ordinary and extraordinary expenditures, provincial spending ceilings, internal allocation of funds, and practices of supply ordering) are possible

irritants to alternative groups, for if the procedures are routinely applied by officials without being fully explained to the groups, feelings of impotence and frustration are bound to develop.

The ALPHA group prepared its own budget, but used categories different from those used by the Board. The total operating budget suggested was $51,780.00 with renovation and construction allowances raising the figure to $54,280.00. Curriculum requirements -- materials, equipment, activities and evaluation -- accounted for $8,500.00, with $2,000.00 allocated to staff-community development. Board officials reordered the items in the proposed budget and allocated expenditures to the acceptable categories boosting the total figure to $59,280.00 in the process. Of this, $20,000.00, incorporating general supplies and equipment, staff-community professional development, rent and contingencies, was additional to Metro formula allowances (funds for items allowable under the Metro formula may be spent without the explicit approval of senior academic officials. Funds additional to the formula are only available when contingency funds have been provided or when other schools underspend their budgets, and can only be spent with the approval of the officials.).

In a letter to the Director of Education, the Chairwoman of the Laneway group estimated the school's budget needs at $22,000.00 to $26,000.00, of which $13,000.00 would be for teacher salaries, $5,000.00 for curricular items, and $4,000.00 to $8,000.00 for rent. As prepared by Board officials, $17,000.00 was allocated for teacher salaries and $2,800.00 for general supplies and equipment. Class establishment grants amounted to $2,000.00 ($1,000.00 for textbooks, $1,000.00 for library books). Total funds allowable under the Metro formula amounted to

$22,620.00. Additional funds of $7,000.00 were budgeted, $5,500.00 of it for rent. An extra allowance for renovations raised the total budget to $31,320.00. These figures, however, were based on an enrolment of forty pupils and a staff of two, operating in rented premises. Eventually, the amounts had to be pro-rated for a reduced enrolment and for one teacher. Also, the funds provided for rent had to be dropped since such funds are "ordinary" expenditures and are subject to the provincial ceilings.

The CONTACT proposal was submitted to the Board after the budget for 1972 had been struck and, accordingly, its founders kept proposed expenditures to the bare minimum. They expressed the hope that accommodation could be found at little or no cost; that many of the required texts and supply items could be obtained from other schools; and that equipment could be kept to the minimum of telephone, typewriter, projector and screen, and basic furniture. The proposal also stated that expenditures on curriculum activities and evaluation, professional development, and resource personnel would be minimized for the 1972 calendar year.

After the group agreed to function as an evening school for the remainder of the year, a schedule of estimated costs was prepared by the officials. The figures were based on a fifteen-week period with teacher salaries ($5,400.00) based on the night school rate of $12.00 per teaching hour. Since the teachers would still be carrying out their duties in their regular schools, $1,260.00 was budgeted for a lay-assistant working twenty-four hours per week, who would be consistently available. $500.00 was allocated for supplies and texts. Total costs were estimated at $8,692.00.

After the budgets were approved and the schools opened, a number of problems arose. One of the first involved the question of the transferability of funds between particular categories, a reasonable procedure in the eyes of the alternative groups, but not easily accomplished. In ALPHA's case, for example, class establishment grants of $2,500.00 were allocated for each of texts and library books, while $4,150.00 was budgeted under the heading of "general supplies and equipment." The group was informed that library books fell under a particular accounting category and that funds for their purchase could not, therefore, be transferred to other areas. Textbooks, however, were in the same budget area as general supplies, so transfers between these two categories were possible. Also, equipment and general supplies were normally separate items, and their grouping in ALPHA's budget meant that in order to leave funds for supplies, little equipment could be purchased. The group was informed, though, that some equipment could be borrowed from Teaching Aids, but with no certainty that they would be available throughout the year. Accordingly, it was strongly recommended that a primary typewriter and 16mm. movie projector be purchased by the school so as not to interrupt the programme. Other items, available only for a two-month loan period, could also interrupt the programme if recalled.

Another problem involved petty cash funds, for it had not been decided who would authorize and control spending or who would be the signing officer for requisitions. This complicated further the question of ordering supplies. To some members of the groups, ordering procedures were obscure. Supplies of paper, pens etc. could be readily obtained

from the Board warehouse; large equipment items could be procured through the Board's tendering system; but textbooks were another problem. Many could be obtained from other schools' surpluses, but it was not clear whether other necessary texts had to be ordered through the Board, with an attendant delay in delivery, or whether they could be purchased directly from the publishers. For direct purchases ready cash was essential, but no procedures were established for either the ordering or for access to the cash.

The final problem for the alternatives was that each school had two budgets: one for the 1972-73 year, the other for the remaining months of 1972. Since funds for supplies included in the 1972 budget had to be spent before the end of the calendar year, ordering had to be completed by mid October. The alternatives, then, had only slightly more that a month to define their needs, and felt that they were forced to order supplies in a hit-and-miss fashion.

All these problems came to a head in the Fall of 1972. A motion was made in the Alternatives Committee that:

> "the Committee approve, in principle, a policy whereby the alternative schools would be permitted to manage their own finances through Board personnel for all general expenditures except for salaries and shelter, subject to monthly accounts being submitted to the Director of Education for approval."

The following month, the officials submitted two reports, one dealing specifically with CONTACT, the other with alternatives generally. The latter recommended that the per pupil allotment for furniture, field trips and equipment be the same for alternatives as for regular schools, and noted that the Board had often expressed a desire that school principals have greater autonomy in budget matters. The former recommended that a

staff member of CONTACT be allowed petty cash funds of $50.00, renewable to the limit of the school's supply money.

At the same meeting, the CONTACT group presented a brief, drawn up after internal deliberation and consultation with the other alternative schools, which outlined three areas of concern in regard to long-term financing. Under "equality of educational opportunity," the brief stated that although "alternate" education should not cost more than traditional education, it was unreasonable to expect that it should cost very much less. Under "flexibility of expenditure," it reiterated that the make-up of a regular school's budget was not necessarily applicable to alternatives since some "normal" school costs could be reduced and/or eliminated in alternatives while other costs, particularly for resource material and people would be increased. And, under "availability of funds," it stated that given the flexibility of the programme, a convenient and quick method of obtaining texts, resources etc. was essential.

Based on these concerns, the brief recommended: that the operating budget "be based on the same per capita formulae used in calculating the operating budget for a normal high school"; that CONTACT should have responsibility for allocating funds within the overall budget; and that supplies other than warehouse items and major equipment be purchased directly by the school from a petty cash fund, and "accounted for to the Board at the time of purchase or afterwards."

Upon receipt of the reports and brief, the Committee recommended: that per pupil allotments be the same for all schools; that all alternative schools be given $150.00 in petty cash and be allowed to purchase all supplies and services, save those mentioned above, directly; and that the alternatives be allowed to decide areas and amounts of expenditure

within their operating budgets "subject to Provincial limitations relating to ordinary expenditures and Capital Expenditures from Current Account."[3] These recommendations were approved by the Board on November 27, 1972.

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3 Board Minutes, 1972, p. 841.

PUPILS AND TEACHERS

Inextricably tied to budgetary matters are the questions of pupils and teachers. Since grants are made, and teachers assigned, on the basis of enrolment, a minimum number of pupils must be enrolled before the desired number of teachers can be hired and budget funds freed for spending. This practice is obviously quite different from that of alternatives operating outside a public system, and is in conflict with the ideals usually espoused by such schools, particularly in the area of the pupil-teacher ratio. This leads some individuals in alternative groups to refer, rather disparagingly, to the "numbers games" which they must play in order to become established within the system.

Apart from sheer numbers, another source of contention as far as teacher appointments are concerned is the procedure of their selection. The selection function is one over which alternative groups wish to maintain control, so as to ensure teacher compatability with the programme. But, as the Solicitor's report to the Board pointed out, a board "may not delegate to committees comprising parents, teachers and others, the responsibility for the selection of staff."

ALPHA planned for an enrolment of 100 pupils, and their pupil selection procedures guaranteed that the projected number would materialize. Of prime consideration was the selection of families, as opposed to individual pupils, with first priority given to "families currently involved and those who become involved in the ongoing planning up to shortly after the final budget approval." The school set guidelines for

age distribution at forty pupils aged four to six, thirty aged seven to ten, and thirty aged eleven to thirteen (all figures plus or minus five).

A minor problem was experienced in approving one aspect of the school's enrolment breakdown. The ALPHA plan was to have children of junior and senior kindergarten age attend all day, rather than the normal half-day. A few other downtown schools had requested all-day kindergarten programmes and had been turned down by the Board, and it was felt by some that approval of ALPHA's programme would constitute discrimination against these other schools. There was also the possibility that some working mothers might wish to enrol their children in ALPHA solely for the purpose of using the school as a day-care centre. The Alternatives Committee, however, decided to allow the programme since the school was an experimental one and approval could not be considered a precedent.

Enrolment in September was actually ninety-six pupils, with the breakdown for the above age groups at forty-three, thirty-two and twenty-one, respectively. The school also kept a list of prospective pupils so as to hold the enrolment around one hundred should some pupils be withdrawn.

For an enrolment of one hundred, ALPHA required three teachers, all of whom were to be drawn from the regular staff in Toronto schools. Although trustees and administrators were supposed to be involved in the selection of staff, the work was carried out by a selection committee of the ALPHA group, which interviewed all applicants. Once the school was approved, advertisements were placed in Community Schools and information about the school's philosophy was outlined in the staff circular. Criteria for selection were set out in the original proposal but in very vague terms, and the basic guideline used by the committee was personal compatibility with the group's philosophy, rather than experience with open education or multi-age groupings. Many of the applicants

withdrew after talking with the committee; a few were rejected.

Two teachers, one from another school in the system, the other a new teacher who would be on probation, offered themselves as a "package deal" and were accepted by the committee, as was another probationary teacher. This conflicted with advice given by Board officials who had previously recommended that probationary teachers not be hired since inspection would be difficult in a "free-school" environment. A few of the ALPHA group were also wary since a teacher without the security of being on staff could be vulnerable to pressures exerted by Board officials. These views did not prevail, however, as the committee's choices were approved by the full group after a general meeting with the teachers, and by the Board after the teachers' qualifications were accepted by the Superintendent of Personnel's Department.

CONTACT's target was for an enrolment of fifty students to be drawn from the rolls of regular high schools and from the ranks of students who had dropped out of the system. Although open to students from all areas of the City, emphasis was placed on enrolling students from the inner-city, and in order to attract students from all streams, no entrance requirements were laid down. It was hoped that the courses, although multi-grade, would be concentrated at the junior and intermediate levels, with special remedial courses in the basic skills. This was dependant, however, on most students coming from the inner-city, since courses would be student-initiated and individualized.

After Board approval of the school, one of the founders sent a letter to high school guidance counsellors explaining the concept and philosophy of CONTACT and asking that any student who might benefit from the programme be referred to the school. CONTACT was also advertized in

conjunction with advertisements for the Board's other evening programmes.

By early October, only seventeen students had registered, although the numbers increased over the following two months to over sixty. Guidance teachers accounted for few of these students, many of whom had read about CONTACT in the newspapers or had heard about it by word-of-mouth. Also, most of the students (about 75%) came from outside the inner-city, with the consequence that most courses were at the senior level. A factor in this was CONTACT's operation as an evening school since many of the potential students in the inner-city were under sixteen years of age and could not attend a "part-time" school while still satisfying compulsory attendance laws.

The "evening school" situation also gave the problems of staffing a different character. Rather than acceptable numbers and ratios, a major difficulty was payment of teachers. Since CONTACT was placed under the administrative jurisdiction of the Assistant Superintendent, Extension Programs, and was operating under the same conditions as other evening schools, fifteen students had to be registered in a course before the teacher could be paid. But, because enrolment was small and many students were registered in two or three of seven possible courses, registration in many of the classes did not reach fifteen. A special procedure for payment based on teacher hours had to be worked out before teachers were paid.

Another problem arose with a new ruling by the Minister of Education to the effect that credit could be given for a course only if the teacher held a certificate, or if no certificated teacher were available. In CONTACT, where no permanent positions were involved, selection of staff took place through an informal network of contacts

rather than a fixed procedure, with the only real criterion being the teacher's "belief in and acceptance of the philosophy of CONTACT and his/her ability to fit into its community and provide positive benefits toward fulfilling its purpose." This resulted in the Art course, for example, being taught by a practicing artist who worked well with the students but who, nevertheless, had to be replaced in the interest of accreditation.

The school with the most problems with enrolment and staffing was Laneway. In its first three years the school operated with a small number of pupils, fluctuating between five and fifteen some of whom were in their late teens. Pupils were accepted by Laneway after their parents were interviewed by the governing parent-teacher council and agreed to attend school meetings. Two teachers, had been chosen through an interview selection process as the most compatible with the parents and programme.

In a letter to the Director of Education, the Chairwoman of the Laneway group suggested that the ideal pupil-teacher ratio for the programme would be around 15-1. The proposal, however, envisioned a 20-1 ratio, with the two existing teachers, being taken on staff and with projected enrolment at up to forty pupils. Board officials urged discussion around two teachers to fifty pupils rather than forty since it was felt that the lower ratio would constitute discrimination against other groups within the system and would be difficult to authorize under the existing Metro formulas.

At one point it was suggested that the only means of sanctioning a lower ratio would be to apply a "special education" designation to the school, a label which could have been applicable since some of the pupils had previously been enrolled in special programmes. The suggestion, however,

met with resistance from both officials and the Laneway group who were opposed to the testing involved, and the designation was not applied.

Another reservation on the Board's part was hiring two new teachers. At the time of the proposal a freeze on hiring was in effect and hopes for increased enrolment throughout the system the following September were not high. There was also little optimism that Laneway would enrol forty pupils since so few had been registered previously. At one point a Laneway representative suggested that the Board should have no trouble producing forty to sixty pupils. But the responsibility for attracting the requisite numbers lay with the school. While wishing to confine enrolment as far as possible to children of elementary school age, it was agreed that older children could be accepted if upgrading was required.

Without a large number of parents in the group and without referrals coming from school guidance counsellors, Laneway had to depend on media coverage and advertising to attract pupils. An article and an advertisement appeared in Community Schools in March and April, 1972, outlining the school's origins and philosophy. Advertisements were placed in the ward newspaper, notices were put up in local shops, and information about the school was reported in a weekly newsletter distributed to elementary schools by the Board. Although a tentative list of twenty-one pupils was submitted by Laneway in July, on opening day in September only nine pupils registered. The number grew to seventeen by mid-year, but four of the pupils, although in attendance at the school, could not be officially enrolled because they were on a "Home Instruction" programme.

The previous June, when it had become likely that the required number of pupils would not be enrolled, there were discussions about finding

another method of hiring the two teachers should the Board not be able to supply one. As the prospective numbers dwindled it was agreed that the Board would pay one of the two, who would be taken on staff on probation, but that the other would have to be paid through alternative means such as a L.I.P. grant or private funding.

ACCOMMODATION

In establishing alternative schools, the problem of finding suitable accommodation is the easiest to solve legally, the most difficult financially and the most contentious philosophically. The natural inclination of a board is to recommend that alternatives be housed in existing facilities if space is available, thus simplifying custodial and administrative-jurisdictional problems. In terms of budget, funds for rented accommodation are ordinary expenditures and are therefore, affected by Provincial ceilings. Also, there is considerable pressure from the Ministry to utilize all existing space before consideration is given to new construction or rentals, even to the extent of housing public and separate schools within the same building.

Among the proponents of alternatives, however, there is an instinctive disinclination to house their programmes in existing school buildings. A theoretical explanation for this instinct is found in an article by Wanzel (1970) who contends that the preoccupation of administrators with formal school buildings reflects an exclusive concern with "formal" education which, in turn, is a manifestation of the triumph of form over content in the educational system. With this, he contends, goes a tendency to define education as that which occurs in a school building, and thus to label invalid any learning which occurs outside the physical container of the school. This attitude, he feels, gives the school an exalted stature which, when combined with the common physical design of a set-back structure surrounded by a "moat of no-man's land, 'not-to-be stepped-on' grass and a chain-link fence," transforms a shelter into a protective shell, with implications not only for the relationships which

are formed within the school, but also for the relationship between the school and its community.

A rationale for the alternative groups' rejection of existing facilities need not be articulated to this extent, however, since there are also very practical reasons for not being so housed, some of which may seem too vague or subjective to really matter, but which are tangible in the minds of the organizers, students and staffs of the schools.

A primary concern, particularly in the early stages of the alternative's development, is the maintenance of a separate identity. In a regular school, this could only be accomplished by a complete separation of facilities and personnel. Another concern is the palpable atmosphere of school buildings which could trigger a variety of responses inimicable to the success of the alternative programme. Children with a history of failure, for example, may be intimidated by the site of their painful memories, thus making remedial action that much more difficult; older students, whose incompatability with the regular programme might have been tied to a sense of regimentation and prohibition, may also feel uneasy in a normal school building. (A minor example was given by a member of CONTACT -- "you walk into a school and you just know you're not supposed to smoke.")

More tangible is the problem of easy access to the school building at irregular hours. A school where all doors but one are locked at 3:15 would not be suitable for an alternative such as ALPHA which was designed to be almost a community centre, with parents, pupils and the local community making constant use of the facilities.

On the other side, shared use can also have disadvantages for the host school, even when students in the two programmes are matched by

background and ability. A radically different programme co-existed with the regular programme at McBride School in Vancouver, for example, with all students drawn from the previously integrated school. In their responses to questionnaires at the end of the first year, students, teachers and parents all singled out jealousy, friction and lack of communication between teachers and students in the two programmes as a major problem. Similar tensions arose between North York's M.A.G.U. alternative and its host school.

Such difficulties were foreseen by the principal of an inner-city school which was recommended by Board officials as a home for ALPHA. While the ALPHA group considered the recommendation, the officials received a memorandum from the principal who had consulted with the staff and parents and who stated the consensus of opinion that it would be inadvisable to accommodate the alternative within his school. The reasons given included the problem of the alternative's identity, extra work for maintenance staff, and the existence of a number of programmes occupying the supposedly vacant classrooms, the existence of which had led to the recommendation being made in the first place. The major reason for rejecting the proposal, however, was the potential for conflict. It was felt that the presence of a large group of high-achievement, middle-class children not strictly subject to compulsory attendance and discipline would breed confusion and tension among the school's own children, while the introduction into the school environment of a high-powered, highly educated group of parents might inhibit the school's extensive programme of parental involvement by intimidating local parents.

Under the Schools Administration Act, a board is required to "provide adequate accommodation during each school year for the children who have a right to attend a school under the jurisdiction of the board"

(S.33:5) and may rent school sites (S.34:6). Although there is no definition in the legislation as to what should be considered adequate, there are some minimum standards which have been adopted by the Board, as well as municipal zoning and building by-laws which set standards and require a Group A, division two classification for occupancy by a school.

Even when funds are available for rental and renovation, the search for a suitable location is long and tortuous. When no such funds are available, it is almost, but not quite, impossible. The three alternative groups experienced different problems in locating their schools, mainly because Laneway and CONTACT had far fewer options to choose from than ALPHA.

In their brief to the Alternatives Committee the CONTACT group stated that because of the differences in administrative and programme routines, such as different hours, groupings, resource inputs and timetabling, it was "obvious that CONTACT could not share facilities with an existing school." They listed their minimum requirements as a large common room, two to four smaller rooms, kitchen and outdoor area, all contained in a facility located in the downtown area near libraries and public transportation lines, and available on a daily basis. The proposal suggested that a church, Y.M.C.A. or community hall would be ideal.

The proposal was submitted to the Committee at such a late date, however, that there was no possibility of renting any premises. The 1972 budget had been struck and, since rentals are affected by spending ceilings, no extra funds could be budgeted. Approval of the proposal, therefore, was contingent on accommodation being available at no cost to the Board, creating a serious problem for the school. The problem was

eased by the approval of CONTACT as an evening school. A house and portable, owned by the Board and used during the day by a group organizing a community school on the site, was available in the evenings. CONTACT's request to use the house rent-free was approved.

While it was registered as a private school, Laneway was housed in Dixon Hall. Located in Trefann Court, the Hall is the neighbourhood's social and family service centre and operates programmes for all age groups from "tiny tots" to senior citizens, as well as family counselling, legal aid, income tax and medical-dental clinics. So much activity within the limited space available caused minor problems for the school, such as high noise levels and the necessity of putting equipment and furniture away every night.

Consequently, in its brief to the Committee, the school asked that other accommodation be found in the eastern-core section of the City, and not in a regular school building, mainly for purposes of identity. The motion to approve Laneway was amended to include a provision for funds to locate the school, subject to approval of 1972 expenditures, although at the time of the motion there was little likelihood of rental funds being included in the budget. Before the expenditures had to be approved, however, the Director of Dixon Hall informed the Director of Education that there would be no fee attached to Laneway's occupancy of the Hall, thus solving the Board's problem, if not Laneway's. The Board then approved Laneway's continued use of the facility.

This was not the end of the difficulties, however, for there was still the question as to whether the rooms used constituted "adequate accommodation." There was no problem with the City, since the building was included in a classification grouping which allowed its use for

non-residential school purposes. But to ensure the approval of the Fire Department, minor modifications had to be made, and, since no funds for renovations had been included in Laneway's budget, Dixon Hall had to assume the financial responsibility for making the alterations.

The Board's architect, who inspected the washroom and the two areas used as classrooms by the school also has reservations, expressing the opinion that the premises were not suitable for the consolidation and expansion of a permanent facility, but might be suitable for a pilot project. He based this on the fact that the two rooms were both artificially ventilated and that one had no natural light. Given the size of the rooms, he also suggested that enrolment be kept to a maximum of twenty. Although this suggestion was not accepted in principle, it was eventually realized in practice.

ALPHA's difficulties in finding accommodation illustrate the myriad problems which can arise when rental funds are included in an alternative's budget. When the school's budget was approved in December,1971, (early enough to be included in the Board's 1972 estimates of expenditure), $12,000.00 was allocated for rent and $2,500.00 for possible renovations to the selected site. Also approved were the following criteria for a location:

> "(a) independent educational facility available on a seven-day basis;
> (b) modifiable interior;
> (c) central location, accessible by public transportation;
> (d) approximately 5,000 square feet of space plus use of gymnasium of equivalent size for recreational purposes;
> (e) kitchen facilities;
> (f) adequate mechanical and electrical services."
>
> (Board minutes, 1971, p. 935)

Although the funds could not be spent prior to final approval of the estimates, the ALPHA group formed a "Location Committee" which

immediately undertook an in-depth search for facilities. A few consultative sessions took place between the Committee and officials to exchange views and information and to explain rental terms and conditions on which negotiations could proceed.

During February, 1972, the Committee inspected nineteen locations, finding only three of them desirable according to the criteria. In March, the Committee drafted an advertisement which appeared in a local newspaper, adding to the original criteria: "compliance with the Toronto zoning and building bylaws with respect to occupance -- Group A, division 2"; "adequate toilet facilities for 100 children"; and "access to usable outdoor play area."

Underlying this activity was the possibility that ALPHA could by housed in an existing public school. After consultation between the Director and ALPHA's liaison, a specific proposal was put forward in early April, to which ALPHA could react. By the end of the month, the memorandum from the principal of the school, discussed earlier, was received, and the idea was dropped. The ALPHA group decided that "any situation which could give rise to friction between the students, teachers and parents of ALPHA and the host community should be avoided," and that the use of a "completely separate facility, with separate entrances and complete physical autonomy" would be the only way to achieve this end.

In a progress report submitted to the Alternatives Committee in May, the Location Committee reported that they had visited or otherwise followed up leads on over forty locations, guided by the original criteria. The list of the sites investigated indicates how extensive the search was: it included a large number of churches, synagogues, "Y's", office buildings and houses, as well as warehouses, a fire hall, a vacated supermarket, an armed forces base and even a funeral home. Of these, twenty-three were

unsuitable, seven were possible sites if the terms of reference were changed drastically, nine were still under investigation and only one, a Y.M.C.A. in the east-central part of the City, was available, acceptable to the Board's Architect's Department and modifiable within the existing budget.

The limitations on the search imposed by the allocation for renovations can be illustrated by the case of one building with high potential. Originally a synagogue, it became a church and was then sold to a group of businessmen. As a result of the changing ownership, the use and occupancy status of the building as a church lapsed, and to reclassify it for use as a school required a change of use zoning, thereby invoking recent and more stringent by-law standards. To meet these standards major alterations would have had to be made, impossible given the $2,500.00 for renovations.

By mid-June, a short list of three sites had been compiled. From the three, the group selected the aforementioned Y.M.C.A., which conformed with the occupancy classification. It had been inspected by Board officials the previous March and had been deemed satisfactory. At that time, however, the ALPHA group had some reservations about the building, so inspection had not proceeded to the point where the Toronto Building Department, the Toronto Fire Department and the Ontario Fire Marshall had been called in. Until their inspection took place, negotiations could not be conducted since the extent of the necessary renovations and whether they could be financed solely from ALPHA's funds was unknown, and the cost of alterations could have been used as a negotiating point.

Accordingly, at the end of June, letters were sent to the relevant authorities. By mid-July, they had outlined the very considerable renovations which had to be made, mainly to the third floor space of which the school would have sole occupancy. Total cost was estimated at $12,000.00.

The Y.M.C.A., which for a number of reasons was anxious to house ALPHA, accepted the $12,000.00 rental on a renewable one-year lease and accepted the $2,500.00 to be applied to the necessary alterations. In return, to meet the fire regulations, the "Y" agreed to install a fire alarm system, enclose the staircase at the first floor level, install a fire hose cabinet in the basement, rearrange partitions and corridors on the second and third floors and replace the wood fibre board acoustic ceiling with non-combustible tiles. The "Y" also agreed to install a toilet facility on the third floor, provide maintenance and janitorial services and pay for heat, hydro and water.

Once these rather good terms were accepted by the Board and the lease signed, the problems seemed to be over. But, all renovations had to be completed by September 5 since the children would not be allowed into the building, not even to the shared-use facilities, until all the work required had been completed, inspected and tested. Drawings necessary for application for the permit to begin alterations were not submitted to the City until August 24th; construction did not begin until the 26th; and on the 29th, the Fire Marshal ordered the installation of seven more hoses. Consequently, work was not finished by the deadline, thereby fouling registration procedures and necessitating a quick search for temporary alternative accommodation.

Space was found in an east end school and, for the first few weeks of the term, children were delivered to the "Y", each morning, then transported to the school, and back again to the "Y" each afternoon. Not until early October could ALPHA occupy its home.

FUTURE ALTERNATIVES

That more public alternatives will appear seems certain, for in them rest the hopes of many educators, students, teachers and parents who doubt that one particular approach to education, applied to every child regardless of abilities or interests, can produce much more than the odd scholar and a multitude of dropouts.

What types of alternatives will be formed in the future is dependent in some respects on the acts under which schools are governed. The present regulations are certainly not an insurmountable barrier to successful experimentation, but a loosening of some of them along the lines of the broadened guidelines for curriculum content and organization, particularly those dealing with decision-making structures and attendance regulations, would encourage types of alternatives now impossible. The Board has taken a few steps in this direction by adopting, in November, 1973, recommendations to request that the Minister establish a commission to examine the acts and regulations with a view to determining their relevancy; to approach the Ministry about lowering the school leaving age to fourteen from sixteen; and to consider the possibility of alternatives to compulsory schooling, such as work/study and residential work experience programmes.

There is still room for variety within the existing regulations, however, and although the Toronto system now has an example of the majority of forms contained in Graubard's typology, new types may soon be proposed. Fantini (1973) states that some alternatives, particularly a Summerhill or one modeled on the Illich-Reimer proposals for deschooling, would be difficult to justify within the public framework. He suggests the

following guidelines for legitimizing public alternatives: the alternative must not be imposed on parents, teachers and students; it must not claim superiority to existing alternatives including the regular public school; it must have as a goal, and be accountable for, the attainment of the entire range of educational objectives expected of a public school; it must guarantee equal access to all; and it must not require funds and resources in excess of those available to regular schools.

Perhaps out of the experiences of the Toronto alternatives may come a rough set of guidelines dealing with the questions of governance, staffing and accommodation. There are certainly enough internal problems to be overcome in such schools that precious energies should not be devoted to these administrative concerns. With regard to governance, although there may be advantages to having each alternative operate under a different administrative set-up, it may be confusing to future petitioners for alternatives and may also carry the possibility that a square alternative peg might be whittled down to fit the most appropriate round administrative hole. This need not necessarily limit the alternative's chance of success, but may alter the parameters within which its success should be measured. A possible procedural model was developed in Seattle where each alternative school has an internal director who is responsible to, and is briefed and psychologically supported by, a four-person task force with full time responsibilities for co-ordinating alternative programmes.

For staffing procedures, problems to be noted are the possibility of teachers "burning out," and the somewhat related question of probationary teachers. Alternative school teachers usually see, and are expected to see, their position as a most basic part of their lives, not as "a job." To begin a school, to plan the programme, to be, in effect, the day-to-

day administrator, and still to conform with the expectations of students and parents can be exhausting. The teachers require a good deal of support and, some would say, experience. This, along with the secondary problem of reporting on a probationer's work in an open-school environment, constitutes a good case against hiring young people straight out of teachers' college. This must be balanced, however, with the recognition that new teachers usually have in abundance a basic requirement for teachers in alternatives -- committed enthusiasm.

Accommodation remains the thorniest question. High officials of the Ministry have recently pointed out, again, that rented accommodation must be justified before grants can be approved. And, it is difficult to justify rented facilities, at least on purely economic grounds, while classrooms are vacant all over the City.

The question of SEED's accommodation arose in the Spring of 1973. The rental for the YMHA in which it is housed, amounts to $21,000.00 per year, and it was suggested by Board officials that SEED could use the portables of a nearby high school or one floor of a public school deeper in the downtown core. In a meeting between officials, trustees, and SEED students and staff, the SEED group argued that by moving the school the students would lose the essential access to the multiple education institutions, people and resources which are within easy walking distance; that the catalysts and interested community visitors, upon whom the programme's success depends, would lose access to the school; that the extra transportation time and money involved in moving away from a major transportation corridor would inhibit all members of the community; that moving to a regular secondary school would lead to unneccessary and destructive tensions between the students of the two programmes; and that

the free-flowing intellectual atmosphere which is the school's hallmark would be stifled by the environment of a regular school building. Another part of the SEED argument was that the high visibility of the $21,000.00 figure tends to blind observers to the "exceptional" recreation facilities, inclusive maintenance charges, and educational advantages which that figure contains.

After examining the consensus of the SEED community, the co-ordinator also raised the possibility that a relocation might result in some of the most committed students dropping out rather than returning to an institutional atmosphere they detested, with a consequent loss of grant revenue and the almost certain death of the school in its present, and successful, form.

These administrative questions will come up again in the summer of 1973 as the Board considers the future plans of ALPHA, Laneway and CONTACT. All three submitted proposals for the 1973-74 year in March, 1973. Both ALPHA and Laneway plan to continue the same programmes developed in 1972-73, although ALPHA will do so with a smaller enrolment. A dispute at mid-year between sub-groups of the ALPHA community led to the resignation of one teacher and the withdrawal of their children by one-third of the parents, many of them the architects of the original proposal. Enrolment dropped to around sixty-five pupils.

CONTACT submitted a lengthy brief stating that the part-time operation had altered the expectations and routines of the programme and had adversely affected both the cognitive and affective development of the students. Although the group felt that the programme had been successful within the framework imposed by the part-time operation, they felt that it would not be beneficial to continue as an evening school.

They therefore proposed returning to the original proposal for a full-time school. Enrolment would be one hundred students, again hopefully drawn mainly from the inner-city, with teachers assigned in the same ratios as applied to Special Education high schools. The group still hoped for a separate facility but stated a preference for quarters in an elementary school should a sharing arrangement be neccessary.

In May, 1973, another alternative proposal was submitted to the School Programs Committee by Board officials. This proposal was developed by a workshop group which designed the school as one component of a broad, three-part project which in some respects is similar to proposals made by Illich and Reimer. The two other components of the LEARNXS (Learning Exchange System) Project are a Learning Resources Exchange (LRE) and an Information-Sharing and Retrieval System (ISRS) both of which would be developed through a co-operative effort by the Board, educational and service agencies, government, business and industry, colleges and universities, other organizations, and individual citizens.

The LRE would identify, select and compile directories of educational resources, including learning materials, activities, experiences, and people with particular skills. The ISRS, developed in conjunction with the information developed by the LRE, would utilize existing resources and "evaluate the potential for the greater use of print, computer application, radio, T.V., telephone, news media etc."[4]

To serve as a proving ground for the LEARNXS project as well as to explore alternative patterns of learning, the alternative secondary school, to be called the "Subway Academy," would be established. It would

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4 Report to the School Programs Committee, May 15, 1973.

be dedicated to using the resources of the community as an extension of school; to encouraging information and skill exchanges; and to involving businesses and the community at large in the learning process in a meaningful way.

The Academy's sixty students and three teacher-facilitators would be housed in an existing school on the Bloor Street subway line so as to ensure easy access to the educational and commercial resources which tend to gravitate towards this major East-West transit artery. The Academy would be autonomous from the host school although administrative and clerical assistance could be requested. With their teacher-facilitator, students would develop an individualized programme on a "learning contract" basis, and would share in the school's decision-making process. Students could attend courses at several different schools located on the line; combine work experience with learning; develop individual or small group projects which would use community resources; or combine all three of these approaches.

The addition of the Subway Academy to the group of Toronto alternatives was approved by the School Program Committee. The proposal for the Academy, which was written and submitted by Board officials, combined information about the hoped for educational objectives and the means of achieving them with definite answers to the administrative problems outlined in this report. The relative ease, administratively, with which the Academy could be established points up one of the values of board-initiated alternatives. Those formed by outside groups who subsequently seek board affiliation also have great value, of course, and the mixed system of alternative establishment which has developed in

Toronto recognizes that, as Fantini suggests, schools influenced by students, teachers and parents may possibly have more meaning and a greater chance of success than those imposed by educators.

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